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“Counting Back: D.O.A.”

At 1:58 a.m., she was pronounced dead on arrival. The glass shards lodged into her skin reflected the crimson moonlight; her glossy eyes were stained with the blood from her torn chest. She was a painted mosaic of upturned flesh and pallid features, every single cut blending into a mirage of an unidentifiable young woman.

“A damn shame,” muttered the overseeing officer, “Look how young.” His languid footsteps were muffled by the soil suffocating her restless body. He calls in for backup as she lays in unrest besides more devoid souls taken in evanescent youth. The only beating heart is the locket lying on her collarbone, a reminder of the promise she would make it home. The sounds of passing cars fade as he calls in for backup.

“Sir, we have a 10-54.” The officer eyes the open wallet besides her reading “Isabelle Lorne”, only sixteen. “Dead on arrival.”

At 3:51 a.m., her silver SUV lay besides her. Beyond the crickets that chirped, the silence was virulent smog in her frail lungs. She couldn’t see beyond the stars as she was pinned in a position of the impending last breath. She lay witness to the exposed marrow of her twisted leg, to the echoes of her coughs. The weight of her friends pressed down on her chest so that she was continuously gasping for air greedily, as they had already given up their air and left her alone.

Phantom tears stained her sunken cheeks as she slowly fell to the grim predators before her. Flashing before her were illustrations of nostalgia - graduations, birthdays, and firsts. In the end, however, there was only a last regret. She spit out the bitter taste of alcohol that burned her tongue and then simply stopped breathing.

At 1:48 a.m., she crawled out of the car. It had rolled down the hillside, landing right besides a babbling creek. In the thick of night, the doors were collapsed inwards and the overturned vehicle’s position was crushing them. Desperate and panting, she drags her mangled limbs out from under her seat, collapsing onto the soil. She’s haunted by the screams of her friends, but it doesn’t diverge from the harrowing absence of respiration from the friends she shouldered responsibility for.

At 1:42 a.m., she realizes the road ahead of her is encased in a thick mist of her inebriated state, and the wheel at her hands is slipping from underneath her fingertips. She's struggling to continue on as her fingers begin to shake. Her head spins under the piercing traffic light, and a chorus of her friends hearty laughter is tuned out by the ringing in her ears. She slowly grows more and more aware of her inability to continue driving. Realization struck too little, too late.

Blinded by the reflection of her rear view mirror, a deer darting in front of her car, a lost grip on the wheel - her control is now adrift. The car swerves off the road immediately, tires squealing in protest against the hardened tar highway as it breaks through the metallic barriers. The last thing she hears before an airbag erupts in front of her is the symphony of adolescent screams banging in her hollow skull.

At 1:30 a.m., her friend Melissa calls shotgun, hopping into the front seat beside her. Her boyfriend, Tommy, is seated snuggly in the back between his two teammates - an accumulation of boisterous energy all together as they pass beer bottles down there line.

"Relax guys. It's not like we won't have plenty by the time we're done," she comments, buckling up and starting up the car. She pulls out of the driveway and heads out towards the liquor store, hiccuping slightly at the sour aftertaste of the jello shot she had prior.

"Ay, Izzy's our girl," remarks Tommy, as his entourage repeat in agreement. Their speech is slurred. The car reeks of alcohol. Spilled liquor stains the leather seats. In the midst of the chaos, she takes a shaky turn, the car near missing the paved sidewalk. She shouldn't be doing this, but she heeds no note. She listens to the exhaust from the juul being hit in the back. She pulls down her dress, shifting uncomfortably in her seat. In the haze of the vapor, she longs for some fresh air, perhaps some time to herself for a clearer head.

Just fifteen minutes until arrival.

At 1:25 a.m., her body aches from the rhythm of life. It's a party, and she's a piece amongst the fifty teenagers shuffled in a mass of sweat and movement. Her feet bare and her lips loose, she's pressed into the hips of Tommy and swaying side to side as a set ensemble. It's life, it's love, and it's a moment. From time to time, the house is in an upheaval of a thunderous beat. It is then that she embraces her boyfriend and feels the tempo of the night guide her soul. The moment isn't fleeting, and it lasts forever. She's *invincible*.

“Hey, we’re all out,” Melissa yells from across the room. Melissa runs up to her, heels clicking and thigh-high lace stockings exposed. “Wanna come with me and get another six-pack?”

“Sure, let me grab my purse.” Izzy walks towards the couch towards where she left her satchel, but in the high of stupidity and impulse, she grabs a shot from the nearby table, downing it before returning back to her friends.

“I’m driving,” she says, and her friends follow her out of the house.

At 10:46 p.m., Tommy asked if she’d like a drink. He stares longley at her, grabbing her hand tightly in his as she gets lost in an ocean of his eyes. She pulls him in for a kiss, and breaking away, she gets lost in the scene of the party.

“Sure,” she said, “As long as it’s just the one.”